

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-6. (canceled)

Claim 7. (currently amended) A ring network, comprising:

a central network element for feeding in data and for distributing both working signals and protection signals on different transmission paths and in oppositely directed transmission directions, and wherein, proceeding from the central network element, the ring network is subdivided into a first part and a second part;

a plurality of further network elements connected to subscribers for forwarding upstream data from the subscribers and for distributing the working signals to the subscribers;

wherein the central network element feeds ~~the~~ a respective working signals into the first and second parts of the ring network;

wherein the central network element, in accordance with portions of the respective working signals fed into the first and second parts of the ring network, feeds the working signals as protection signals into the respective other part of the ring network; and

wherein the further network elements forward the protection signals as far as the respective network element terminating the first and left-hand parts of the ring network, and the protection signals are fed into the respective other terminating network element of the first and second parts of the ring network and are forwarded counter to a transmission direction of the working signals to the central network element.

Claim 8. (previously presented) A ring network as claimed in claim 7, wherein the network elements terminating the first and second parts of the ring network are designed such that the protection signals previously forward at the further network elements are selected and fed into the respective other terminating network element of the first and second parts of the ring network.

Claim 9. (previously presented) A ring network as claimed in claim 7, further comprising: optical splitters for splitting the working signals.

Claim 10. (previously presented) A ring network as claimed in claim 7, further comprising: one of optical filters and multiplexers for joining together different optical signals.

Claim 11. (currently amended) A method for distributing data within a ring network for feeding in data and for distributing both working signals and protection signals on different transmission paths and in oppositely directed transmission directions and for forwarding data from subscribers and for distributing the working signals to the subscribers connected to network elements, the method comprising the steps of:

subdividing the ring network into a first part and a second part;

feeding ~~the~~ a working signals into ~~both~~ the first part and a working signal into a second parts of the ring network;

feeding ~~the~~ a working signals as a protection signals into each a respective other part of the ring network in accordance with the respective working signals fed into the first and second parts of the ring network;

forwarding the protection signals as far as the respective network element terminating the first and second parts of the ring network;

feeding the protection signals into the respective other terminating network element of the first and second parts of the ring network; and

forwarding the protection signals counter to a transmission direction of the working signals to the central network element.

Claim 12. (previously presented) A method for distributing data within a ring network as claimed in claim 11, the method further comprising the steps of:

selecting, in the terminating network elements, the protection signals forwarded at the further network elements; and

feeding the protection signals into the respective other terminating network element of the first and second parts of the ring.